

# A Water Saving Garden of Inspiration

Are you looking for ways to improve or brighten your landscape? You might want to stop by the Arlington Southwest Branch Library for some ideas.

The city is putting the finishing touches on a new water conservation demonstration garden showcasing the beauty of native and adapted plants that thrive in our drought-prone North Texas climate.

"We've introduced drought tolerant grasses, shrubs and perennials to create a low water use landscape design," said Greg Schadt, the garden's landscape architect. "I want people to see plant communities that offer a diversity of color and don't require a lot of maintenance once they're established."

You can think of this place as a way to give your landscape a test drive. Schadt points out that if you see designs or plant groupings that work here, you should be able to transplant them to your location as long as the soils are compatible and the lighting is similar.

Arlington's Water Conservation Program Manager Dustan Compton likes the fact that the garden will help people overcome the notion that a water saving landscape or xeriscape doesn't have to look like a desert. "It's really about using plants specific to your region – not plants that require much higher amounts of water than the natural rainfall we receive here," he said.

One of the key components of this water efficient landscape is the extensive use of drip irrigation. The initial irrigation design consisted of conventional spray irrigation. However, to save water and money in the long run the city opted to replace that system with a drip irrigation system. Drip tubing was placed in all of the shrub and perennial beds, while spray irrigation was kept in the turf areas.

"Drip irrigation concentrates water where the plants need it – at the roots – without spray so we don't have evaporative loss or overspray," said Schadt.

Information about drip irrigation and water wise landscaping principles will be placed on signs throughout the garden. More detailed information about the plants can be found online at [www.txsmartscape.com](http://www.txsmartscape.com).

The project is a partnership of the city and the Tarrant Regional Water District. A majority of the funds were provided through a \$50,000 grant TRWD received from the Texas Water Development Board.



Workers weave a surface drip irrigation system through the plant beds that will put water where the plants need it – at the roots – without losses to evaporation or overspray. Once installed, the drip tubing will be covered by a two to four inch layer of mulch.



## Proper Planning and Design

Developing a landscape plan is the first and most important step in creating a water-efficient landscape. Think of it as a roadmap.

## Soil Analysis and Improvements

Have your soil tested by your county extension office. They will suggest ways to improve your soil's ability to support plants and retain water.

## Appropriate Plant Selection

Choose plants that are native or adapted to the North Central Texas climate. These drought-resistant plants will save you time on maintenance and money on your water bills.

## Practical Turf Areas

Keeping our lawns pretty and green takes a lot of water and generally requires more maintenance than other vegetation. Limiting turf to areas for entertainment and play will reduce your landscape watering needs.

## Remember to Mulch

Using mulch around trees and plant beds will minimize evaporation, moderate soil temperatures, inhibit weed growth and help control erosion.

## Irrigate Efficiently

Adjust your irrigation schedule seasonally. The goal is to reduce water waste by using only as much water as needed to keep your plants healthy.

## Provide Regular Maintenance

Using native and adapted plants will help you establish a low maintenance landscape – not a "no maintenance" landscape. The maintenance needs of a water-efficient landscape should decrease over time as plants mature.

More information on water-efficient landscaping can be found online at [www.savetarrantwater.com](http://www.savetarrantwater.com).